STRING OF PEARLS

Sixty-Four "Romance" *Kharja*s
from Arabic and Hebrew *Muwashshaḥāt*
of the Eleventh-Thirteenth Centuries

translated with notes
and an introduction

by

James DenBoer

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For my daughter Molly
and my son Josh

I want to acknowledge, in the warmest and most grateful manner, all the help I have been given by Dr. Samuel G. Armistead, *maestro* and friend, as he is to so many. Dr. Armistead was warmly enthusiastic when I first approached him (without any warning) with a group of these translations, and then provided constant encouragement, generous hours of advice and close reading, and gentle correction of all my many faults and misunderstandings. He also recited long passages of Whitman and Chaucer, identified birds soaring across his office windows at UC Davis, and told me much about turtles.

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To these three I owe most of what I have accomplished here.

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, through the intervention of the Princes of Serendip, I came across the papers of Samuel Miklos Stern, collected in a volume titled *Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry*, edited by L. P. Harvey. At the time, I was translating one of the books of the *Opera Poetica* of Venantius Fortunatus, a sixth-century Latin poet living in the Frankish Kingdoms, and I'd wandered into nearby stacks holding medieval Spanish literature.

Stern's papers fascinated me, for whatever reason then, and while finishing the Latin poetry, I also began to read more about his work and that of others in the field of Hispano-Arabic poetry. Little is known of Stern's biography; he is described most often simply as "MA Jerusalem, PhD Oxon.," a professor at All Souls. I learned that his studies had opened up a new vista of early Spanish literature, as he had uncovered a series of Hebrew *muwashshaḥāt* with *kharja*s written at least partially in Romance (the quotation marks around "Romance" in my title are meant to point out that most of the *kharja*s

have only *some* words or phrases in Romance, and that few are wholly in Romance). Romance is a general term widely given to languages derived from Vulgar Latin, and here it is used to distinguish that dialect spoken by Muslims, Jews and Christians living in the southern, Muslim-ruled areas of the Iberian Peninsula.

The publication of Stern's discoveries, first in an article (1948) and later as a book, *Les chansons mozarabes*[1] (1953), set off an outpouring of scholarly work by Hispanists, Arabists, Hebraists, philologists, literary historians, musicologists and other specialists, which continues today (60 years later) in Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, French, Italian, English, German, Dutch, and other languages (even Japanese and Russian), a group of studies as often marked by contention as by revelation. Stern's discovery has been called, by another writer, "one of the most resounding events in the history of modern Western scholarship."[2]

But some definitions are needed:

Muwashshaḥa

A *muwashshaḥa* (*muwashshaḥāt*, plural) is an Arabic poetic form, with strict rules of rhyme and meter and, to a great extent, common themes. The *muwashshaḥa* was invented in al-Andalus, perhaps late in the tenth century, and written in both Arabic and Hebrew.

Matla^{c}

A *muwashshaḥa* usually has a short rhymed introductory verse, called the *matla^{c}*, which, if missing, makes a *muwashshaḥa* "bald" — aqra' (Ar.) or calva (Sp.)

Strophes (Bayt & Qufl)

The *matla^{c}* is followed by five to seven strophes, each of which has two parts, called the *bayt (*Ar. "stanza"*)* and the *qufl (*Ar. "return"*).* Each strophe is made up, then, of a rhymed verse and a rhymed refrain (the *bayt* uses different rhymes from strophe to strophe; the *qufls* have a common rhyme scheme, picked up from the *matla^{c}* and repeated in the *kharja,* the *qufl* of the last strophe).

The lines of the last strophe, those that just precede the *kharja* itself, introduce the "singer" of the *kharja,* usually by means of *verba dicendi* (phrases including a verb form such as "she sang," "she said"). The "singer" is almost always a young woman, but is occasionally the voice of the poet-creator of the *muwashshaḥa* himself, or a bird, the people of a city, even a personified abstract concept. I call these various voices "singers," because their words are often explicitly introduced as songs, because the *kharja*s are usually based on traditional songs, and because the *muwashshaḥāt* themselves were most likely sung, in court recitations, by singing girls. (Although the voices of the *kharja*s are usually feminine in register, the Hispano-Romance or Hispano-Hebrew *muwashshaḥāt* that we know were all written by men.)

Kharja

Finally, the *kharja* (Arabic for "exit," with <u>*kh*</u> like Ba<u>ch</u> and *j̲* like j̲elly) the closing *qufl* of the final strophe. Simply put, the *kharja* is usually a quotation from a traditional (women's) song, incorporated into (appended to) the formal *muwashshaḥa*. Much evidence suggests that the *kharja*s are *matla*^{c}*s* of previous poems. As the matla^{c} becomes the refrain of the *muwashshāḥa*, repeated after every strophe, its melody would be familiar to the singers; the *kharja*, then, functions to remind the singers of the melody to which the new poem should be sung. We are dealing, then, as Stern noticed, with an example of musical *contrafactura*.

The *kharja* ends a *muwashshaḥa* on a strikingly different note than that of the preceding strophes, and by its switch in voice, its shift in tone, its appropriated *personae*, its informality, its use of vernaculars, "reverberates" back through the ornate and more conventional strophes that precede it — not with modern irony, but with honest cries of longing and of love, with strongly felt expressions of humor, anger, threat, satire, erotic yearning, and other shades of human feeling.

* * *

The discovery by Stern of Romance words and phrases (which had much perplexed previous scholars) in the *kharja*s of *muwashshaḥāt* in Hebrew was immediately recognized as highly important— *his work pushed back Ibero-Romance literary history by at*

least a century, and it revealed the existence of a European lyric poetry prior even to that of the troubadours. Indeed, the *kharja*s now have been generally accepted as the earliest European lyric poetry. It also situates "Spanish" literature as beginning with the lyric, rather than with the epic.

What followed after Stern's discovery was greatly increased attention to medieval poetry in al-Andalus, especially of those *muwashshaḥāt,* whether in Arabic or Hebrew, with *kharja*s at least partially in Romance. (There are, as well, many *muwashshaḥāt* with *kharja*s not containing Romance words or phrases, but in classical or colloquial Arabic, and Hebrew.)

An Arab critic who set down rules for the *muwashshaḥa*, Ibn Sanā al-Mulk (1155-1211), an Egyptian Arab who had never been to al-Andalus, claimed that the poets writing *muwashshaḥāt* first chose their *kharja*s from traditional songs, and then wrote the *mat-la*^{c} and the *muwashshaḥa*'s strophic verses that lead up to it.

I agree generally with those who feel that something is lost by focusing attention on the *kharja*s, fascinating as they are, divorced completely from their *muwashshaḥāt* — as I have nevertheless done. The practice of removing the *kharja*s from their full poetic context is one of the major contentious issues in *kharja* research. My notes to each *kharja* attempt to lessen this wrench by giving some flavor of the *muwashshaḥa* to which they belong. But I believe the *kharja*s can stand alone as *poetry*, by their unique tone and con-

tent. They are the crux, the point of the undertaking; there is no *muwashshaḥa* without the *kharja*; the *kharja* is "the spice of the *muwashshaḥa*, its salt, its sugar, its musk and its ambrosia," says Ibn Sanā al-Mulk. Seeing them standing alone can in fact heighten their virtues.

* * *

The main sources for the *kharja*s I have translated are these prior translations into French and Spanish:

Stern, Samuel Miklos. *Les chansons mozarabes. Les vers finaux (kharjas) en espagnol dans les muwashshaḥs árabes et hébreux*. Palermo, 1953.

García Gómez, Emilio. *Las jarchas romances de la serie árabe en su marco.* Madrid, 1965.

Sola-Solé, Josep. *Corpus de poesia mozarabe (las* harga-*s andalusies).* Barcelona, 1973.

As I do not have Hebrew or Arabic, I have had to rely on these sources, and a few others in Spanish and English. My translations are those of a poet, not a scholar, and I trusted these sources as accurate and useful enough for my purposes.[3]

Stern gave me the impetus to begin, by his breakthrough work on the Hebrew *muwashshaḥāt*; García Gómez provided a base in Spanish for the *kharja*s in Arabic *mu-*

washshaḥāt; and Sola-Solé helped throughout with a detailed summary of most of the previous work on the *kharja*s up to 1973, making prose renditions of the *muwashshaḥāt*, and closely examining each *kharja* as handled by others, along with his own transcriptions, interpretations, and translations into Spanish, upon which I have relied heavily.

I have put the *kharja*s into the order given by Sola-Solé, which is roughly chronological, based on the birth/death dates of each author, where the author is known. But, four additional *kharja*s with known authors, discovered by James T. Monroe and published originally in *Hispanic Review* in 1974 and 1979[4], have been inserted into the chronology established by Sola-Solé[5]. Anonymous *muwashshaḥāt* and their *kharja*s are kept together at the end of the *Corpus*, while the final *kharja* (64) is one used in a *zajal* by the celebrated Arab poet Ibn Quzmān (the *zajal* is a poetic form related to the *muwashshaḥa*, occasionally using a *kharja*).

There are some aspects of these ancient poems that I believe will be attractive to modern readers. First, their "unexpectedness" in the context of the very formal *muwashshaḥāt*, full of classical Arabic themes and metaphors. Suddenly, another voice is introduced who speaks, with little formal imagery or stylistic devices; the *kharja*s seem to glint like a bright eye in a shadowed room. They also seem "unexpected" in that we don't often find such direct, moving, and plain speech in centuries-old texts.

Second, the voices of the Romance *kharja*s, with a few exceptions, are those of women -- not the frail vaporous women of "poesy," but real women, filled with love and anguish, submissive and directive, angry and sweet, humorous and erotic, with sisters and mothers and friends and lovers. That these voices were taken by men from traditional songs implies that these songs have been *heard, listened to,* by these poets, not unusually, but commonly; men were forced, by echoing them, to acknowledge the authenticity and power of these female voices. The Romance *kharjas* are usually quotations from the refrains of strophic women's songs, now lost.[5]

Third, these poems are very urban. In the *muwashshaḥāt* and *kharja*s there are villas and gardens, streets and markets, rooms and doorways, courts and wine-taverns, next-door neighbors and merchants and soldiers, people of diverse races, religions and trades; there is a kind of bustle and jostling. There is little of the pastoral, of the fields and the sun-slanted changes of the seasons, of direct observation of nature. To be sure, there are natural elements, many of them: lions and gazelles and birds, flowers and trees, sun, moon and stars — but these mentions are more metaphorical than material, more the structured images of classical Arabic; — few of these images are used directly in the *kharja*s themselves, while they swarm in the formal strophes of the *muwashshaḥāt*.

Finally, there is a sense in which these love-songs seem familiar to us; we realize that they are the precursors of our own popular lyrics and song-titles, from "love me tender" to "hit the road, Jack" to "lover, come back to me," and hundreds more. David

Soldier, of the musical group The Spinozas[6], sees Andalusian strophic poetry, with its structure of verse and refrain, as one major source of "popular" music in the West, while Karla Malette[7] has written a fascinating article linking *kharja*s, modern Middle Eastern music, and the songs of Nina Simone. María Rosa Menocal, in her brilliant book, *Shards of Love*, makes explicit (and emotionally moving) these connections between ancient Arabic poetry and literature and our own "popular" music, with reference to such modern musical icons as Eric Clapton, Duane Allman, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, and Billie Holiday[8]. *Muwashshaḥāt* are still sung in North Africa and elsewhere[9], and this music can be found on CD in many book and music stores today.

* * *

As I write, two Western pond turtles are sunning on a cottonwood limb half-fallen into the Sacramento River. Turtles are ancient in lineage and in mien; but here they are, stretching their necks to enjoy the same sun I am enjoying, the same warm air. The *kharjas*, too, are old, but also ours — they speak of love, its joys and despairs, about pretty girls and handsome men, and who is being done wrong and by whom, and how rapturous is being together or being together again, about the other woman or the other man, about brown skin and red lips and blonde hair, brocades and jewelry, about flirting and leaving. These are the voices of men and women from a millennium ago, their live little songs, now in our ears.

* * *

1. "Mozárabe" (from Ar. *musta'rab*: "Arabized"), as used in the title of Stern's and Sola-Solé's books, is a term, not entirely useful, for Iberian Christians and their language; that is, the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula who were not Muslims, and their Vulgar Latin/Romance dialect. "Se da esta denominación a los cristianos que vivían en zonas de la Península Ibérica dominada por los árabes y al complejo grupo de dialectos románicos que hablaban y que se caracteriza por rasgos arcaicos, similares al gallego-portugués, al leonés, al navarro-aragonés, en oposición al castellano." Centro de Informaciones Pedagógicas - *Cuadernos de la Facultad de Historia, Geografía y Letras-Tecnología educativa: Glosario de términos más usados en comunicación y lenguaje*. 2005.

2. "One cannot deny that the discovery and publication of the Romance kharjas in the late forties by S. M. Stern was one of the most resounding events in the history of modern Western scholarship, as it is doubtful whether any other subject in this realm has ever been the concern, in such a short span of time, of so many people who dedicated to it literally hundred of articles and books." Federico Corriente. "The Behavior of Romance and Andalusian Utterances in the Kharjas under the Constraints of 'Arūḍ," p. 60. *Studies on the* Muwaššaḥ *and the* Kharja. *Proceedings of the Exeter International Colloquium*. Edited by Alan Jones and Richard Hitchcock. Ithaca Press Reading for the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Oxford University, 1991.

3. "It seems to me that Arabists and Hebraists cannot complain too vigorously about non-specialists in those languages proceeding on inadequate information if they do not make adequate information available." Jones, Alan. "Omnia Vincit Amor," p. 98. *Studies on the Muwassah and the Kharja. Proceedings of the Exeter International Colloquium*, 1991.

4. Cf. Monroe, *Hispanic Review*, 41.3 (Summer 1974), 243-264, & *Hispanic Review*, 47.1 (Winter 1979), 9-24.

5. Sola-Solé's numbering of the *kharja*s is therefore disrupted by these four new insertions, a matter not of great consequence. Future *kharja* studies which make use of Sola-Sole's numberings will simply have to adjust to the proposed re-numberings.

6. Monroe, James T. In correspondence 4/28/2008

7. Soldier, David. "Dave Soldier's new group, the Spinozas, explores the very beginning of the European pop and art song traditions. This comes from medieval Andalusia (c. 800-1300) . . . This was the birth of song form with verses and choruses - the Arabic names for these lyrics was *muwashshaḥa* and *zajal* . . . . These poems, hundreds of which survive, were always sung, and imitated by the singers up north in Provence . . . . This

'Golden Age of Hebrew Poetry' and 'Golden Age of Arabic Poetry' initiated virtually the entire Western song repertoire, meaning Schubert, the Beatles, Hank Williams, opera, and most of the other art and pop music of our world." <www.mulatta.org/Spinozas.html>, 2005.

8. Malette, Karla. "Misunderstood." *New Literary Theory: Multicultural Essays*, Volume 34, Autumn 2003, Number 4, 677-697.

9. Menocal, María Rosa. *Shards of Love. Exile and the Origins of the Lyric*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1994.

10. Liu, Benjamin & James T. Monroe. *Ten Hispanic-Arabic Strophic Songs in the Modern Oral Tradition: Music and Texts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. See also Abdu-Noor, M. Ikraam. "Sunset in the Gardens of al-Andalus." *Nebula* 2.1, 2005.

String of Pearls

Sixty-Four "Romance" *Kharja*s

from Hebrew and Arabic *Muwashshaḥāt*

1.

I love you so much, so much,

so much, my love,

that my eyes are red with weeping

and always burn.

خ

This *kharja* concludes a *muwashshaḥ* by the Hebrew poet Yōsef al-Kātib, and is perhaps the oldest known, from the first half of the eleventh century — the brother Iṣḥāq, mentioned in the poem, died in 1042, and the poem was written before that. The *muwashshaḥ* is a panegryric to Abū Ibrāhīm Šemūel and his brother Iṣḥāq, important Jews at the courts of Granada. After extolling the virtues of the brothers, the poet asks them to listen to his song, that is, the *kharja*, in which he declares his love "using his best words." The poem is in Hebrew, and the Arabic and Romance words are Hebraicized; in transcription from Hebrew letters to unvocalized Arabic and Romance words the first line reads:

tnt ʼmʼry tnt ʼmʼry ḥbyb tnt ʼmʼry

with hbyb=habīb (lover) the only Arabic term. The triple register, from Hebrew to Arabic and Romance, reflects the Arab, Hebrew and Christian religious and social divisions in al-Andalus, while highlighting the code-switching between each group. Jews and Christians knew and used Arabic regularly, and each group had at least some members who knew all three main languages, both in their "street" and their religious or literary aspects. The *kharja* is in the voice of the poet himself. The first line reads, in modern Spanish: "Tanto amar, tanto amar, amigo, tanto amar," or, in Stern's original translation in French: "Je tʼaimerai, je tʼaimerai si bien, mon ami, je tʼaimerai si bien." As is usual with Hebrew *muwashshaḥāt*, this one is replete with Biblical allusions, and the lover could be taken as Israel itself.

2.

Come, my enchanter --

come like a dawn bright with fire;

and when you get here,

you will beg for my love!

خ

This *kharja* is used with two different Arabic *muwashshaḥāt*, one by by ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz ibn Muʻallim, the other anonymous. The first is a panegyric to someone named Abū ʻAmr, who is seen as the essence of perfection, and is described throughout by "los tópicos habituales," to quote Sola-Solé; he means the standard images of Arab encomia: here they include "more beautiful than the dawn," and "stronger than a lion." The *kharja* to the first is attributed to Glory, who herself is jealous of Abū ʻAmr for all his "excellences." In the second *muwashshaḥ*, the author has written a love poem, again using some of the habitual topics, such as the wine of love, the pain of the lover's glance, the rain like tears at a parting. The *kharja* to this *muwashshaḥa* is sung by a young woman, who also sings of the absence of one that is loved.

3.

My man is violently jealous; he hurts me.

If I go out, he will harm me —

I can't make a move or he threatens me.

Mamma, tell me what to do!

ڂ

The *muwashshaḥa* is a love poem by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Arfaʿ Ra'suh; because of love, he cannot sleep; his beloved doesn't know the poet's suffering; the poet will die if the lover leaves him. Every time he turns over in bed, the love in his heart grows, he says. "You, you are my best lover" — *amado* is in the masculine gender; experts point out that the use of the masculine in Arabic often includes reference to females as well as males, so there is no necessity to see this *muwashshaḥ* as addressed to a young man, though this is possible. The woman who sings the *kharja* calls upon her mother for help: "mamma, tell me what to do!" (*mam(m)a a ġar ke farey*) — the *topos* of the daughter/mother is frequently used in the *kharja*s, as in other traditional songs. Unusually, the poet introduces the *kharja* with a question: "How many young women have spoken allusively to their mothers of their fear of a lover?"

4.

Mamma, how can I believe his promises

or his lies? He never speaks at all!

I want to stop seeing him —

yet being apart from him is so hard!

خ

Another *muwashshaḥa* by Ibn Arfaʿ Raʾsuh, a panegyric dedicated to Yūsuf ibn Hūd, a Zaragozan ruler of the eleventh century. The *muwashshaḥa* is in seven strophes. Yūsūf is addressed as a lover would be: there's no sin to being in love, the poet says; the lover is beautiful, with eyelashes like swords, his cheeks are more perfect than gardens; the poet must be willing to live with the pains of love, and so on. The poet will never forget hearing a young woman sing in the night, her voice rising above the sound of music, lamenting, sighing . . . and he then uses her words for the *kharja*.

5.

Mamma, if this craziness of mine

doesn't let up soon, I am going to die!

Bring me my wine from Ja'far's house;

sometimes that calms me down.

خ

Almost identical *kharjas* (differing only in a few rhymed words) are used with two different *muwashshaḥāt* in Arabic. One of them is by Ibn Arfaᶜ Raʻsuh, a panegryic to the king Abū-l-Ḥasan (of Toledo), and the other, by Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Mālik al-Saraquṣṭī, a vizier and philosopher who died in Seville, is a panegryic to the high official Ibn ʻUbayd, The first begins like a love song: the poet is being criticized for his love — "leave me in peace!" he says to his detractors, who are jealous of him. But his lover is cruel, he "kills" the poet. *Los tópicos habituales*. In this poem, the *kharja* is in the voice of a young woman mad with love, again calling to her mother.

The second *muwashshaḥa*, by al-Saraquṣṭī, is much the same: the poet first sees his loved one as unjust; the lover withholds a kiss that would comfort him, etc.; then the poet praises his subject, Ibn ʻUbayd, for his generosity, for being the bravest warrior — superior to the greatest warriors of the East or West. The *kharja* is sung by a group of young women who are in love with Ibn ʻUbayd themselves.

6.

Tell me, girl-friends,

when will my love give me --

O God! when will he give me --

the only medicine that will cure me?

خ

The *muwashshaḥ* is by Abü Īsā ibn Labbūn, an Arab poet who was a lord of Murviedro (now Sagunto), and then a magistrate in the court of king Ma'mūn of Toledo. It is a love poem, in which the poet accepts the suffering love brings; he asks for a kiss that will save him from death; love has taken possession of his reason and intelligence, and has humiliated him . . . the *kharja* is sung (sadly) by some women, sick from love, who share the poet's "condition." The images of love as a sickness -- as also in the medieval western European tradition -- and the ministrations of the lover as a cure, or a healing, are common in these poems.

7.

Mamma, my love is going away

and won't be back again!

Tell me what to do, mamma,

if my pain doesn't ease!

ڃ

The same *kharja* is used in two different *muwashshaḥāt*; one by Ibn Labbūn, which is much older than the other, written by Abū-l-Walīd Yūnus ibn ʿĪsà ȧl-Ḫabbāz al Mursī (al-Mursī: from Murcia; al-habbāz: a baker). Both *muwashshaḥāt* are filled with typical tropes: gazelles (young, seductive, in rut), gardens, rosy cheeks, lions, looks sharp as lances, a kiss that can cure love-sickness — all in the service of describing a lover's feelings when abandoned. Ibn Labbūn says he loves his beloved "for her fierceness"; she leaves him, to his humiliation; she is like a deadly viper, a star, a shining pearl. In the other *muwashshaḥa* by al-Mursī, the poet's salvation is to be found only in the beloved's eyes and in her kisses. In the *kharja* of the first *muwashshaḥa*, the young woman is said "not to cease" in the laments which she sings to her mother; in the second, the speaker of the *kharja* calls to her mother with passion, while "in a state of stupor," with tears streaming from her eyes.

8.

Mamma, someone cautioned my love:

“The loyalty of women? That’s bullshit.”

Perhaps; but I have one firm belief:

I will only love a man who is loyal to me.

ڂ

This *kharja* ends an anonymous Hebrew *muwashshaḥa*, although it might be by Yehūdā ibn Gaiyāt de Lucena, a close friend of the great Hebrew poets Moshe ibn Ezra and Yehūdā Halevī. The *muwashshaḥa* is a panegyric for the rabbi Yōsef Halevī ibn Mīgāš, director of the Rabbinical Academy of Lucena. The poet says he is “consumed” by love for a little fawn, love that is unreturned — violating the law of love. The *kharja* is in the voice of a “gazelle,” that emblem of Arab poetry, standing for a lover — this “gazelle” sings to her mother, who seems to have raised objections to the girl’s lover, with her best words (*palabras bellas*). And “bullshit”? — well, García Gómez says “poca,” which doesn’t mean much, while Sola-Solé’s version in Spanish is “caca,” almost-homonym to the Arabic “qq,” vocalized as “qaq(q)a.”

9.

I said:

something sweet,

like *that*,

makes my little mouth

even sweeter!

خ

This *muwashshaḥa* was written by a poet-king of Seville, al-Muʿtamid ibn ʻAbbād (1040-1095), and is a love poem. In the usual manner, the beloved's beauty is praised; she is a black gazelle, she has the fire of wine on her lips, she has no equal among those of her tribe, she is so beautiful she seems imaginary . . . in the last strophe, there is a little dialogue. The beloved says she is afraid of sinning; the poet asks: Why? that you give up a kiss is nothing abominable! After a night of pleasure, the loved one says to the man who is drowsily leaving her: You've been dreaming for hours; you were oblivious of me! And when she leans over him, she sings the *kharja*.

10.

O, my heart,

you who desire good loving!

My little lamb is leaving.

And you, my heart, you

will not stop loving him!

— from the Sola-Solé translation

O, my heart --

you who love me so well!

For all my tears I would need

eyes deep as the sea!

– from the García Gómez translation

خ

Here are two interpretations of the same *kharja*, from a *muwashshaḥa* by Abū Muḥammad ibn ʻĪsà (also known as Ibn al-Labbāna). One version of the *kharja* is by Sola-Solé, the other by García Gómez, both great scholars in this contentious field — the two versions make clear that experts can widely diverge in their translations: here, between a cry to a lost lamb and a wish for eyes that might hold a sea full of tears. The *kharja*, being corrupt, has opened the way to these variants, a fact that holds true in many instances.

11.

My lord Ibrāhím

— how sweet you are! —

come to me tonight.

If not, if you don't want to,

I will go to you:

just tell me where to meet you!

خ

The *muwashshaḥa* is a love poem by Muḥammad ibn ʿUbāda al-Qazzāz al-Mālaqī (of Malaga); it is dedicated to the poet's friend Abū ʻAmr, a bachelor, the poet's "amigo íntimo," whose first name is perhaps Ibrāhīm. In the first strophe, the poet apostrophizes the South Wind, asking it to carry his ardent pleas to his absent friend. The friend has black eyes like sharp arrows, he has a plumed sword that, when it strikes someone, no doctor will be of help, and so on (also complaining that the friend never takes his, the poet's, advice). The poet and the young woman singing the *kharja* are perhaps in love with this same Ibrāhīm. The singer of the *kharja* is introduced as someone who never stops complaining that her lover is unjust; she sings without hope that he will return. That she stutters over two "if-s" in the fourth line is perhaps an indication of her uncertainty, her anxiousness, her impatience.

12.

Yes, yes, come, my lord,

and when you get here,

your little red mouth

(like a rosy dove),

I will feed with kisses!

خ

A *kharja* from another *muwashshaḥa* by ibn ʿUbāda al-Mālaqī, again a love poem. The *muwashshaḥa* takes up the theme of the origin of love: it comes from God, since it cannot be defined by men; to us, love is like magic. The poet goes on to describe his beloved in the usual picturesque terms. The *doncella (*young woman*)* who speaks in the *kharja* is not at all shy about her feelings for her lover, the poet, and like most of the women *kharja*-singers, is not at all the vaporous, sighing, damsel that some later poets invented as an ideal. These women are strong, outspoken, sure of their feelings in love or anger, able to mourn and to savor, ready to wield psychological and erotic power.

13.

I am near death;

I am desperate!

What shall I do,

my mother?

The one who spoils me

is going away.

خ

Attributed to an unknown Ibn ʿAbbād (but most likely Ibn ʿUbāda al-Mālaqī), the *muwashshaḥa* is a panegyric for an unnamed king, perhaps Muʿtaṣim of Almería. The poet begins by wishing for a cup of red wine and the sounds of string music, as a distraction from his pains (of love); he goes on to rail at those *locos* who oppose love, and promises always to sing of the king's attributes in his poems — Muʿtaṣim is like a perfect moon, who guides the traveler at night. The *kharja* is said to be a song of one who is sorrowful, the song of a warrior whose victory has been grueling — put in the mouth of "una muchacha desperada" (Sola-Solé) — another play of registers, as we have seen before.

14.

I love a dear boy,

who belongs to another;

and he loves me.

But his wicked guardian

wants to keep us apart!

خ

This *kharja* is used by three poets in three different *muwashshaḥāt*, all of them love poems. The first and oldest is by the Arab poet Abū Bakr Yaḥyà al-Saraqusṭī al-Jazzār (the butcher), who wrote until almost the end of the eleventh century. The second is by Abū Bakr Yaḥyà ibn Baqī, who died in 1145. The last is a Hebrew *muwashshaḥa*, by Moshe ibn Ezra, who died in 1139. Al-Jazzār's *muwashshaḥa* plays with the themes of fire in the heart and tears in the eyes of a lover; he asks for pity from his lover, and speaks the *kharja* himself, to a friend. Ibn Baqī's *muwashshaḥa* says love is good, there is no error in love, nothing bad in his lover — but why is he censured by others? He then praises his lover's beauty in standard terms, and puts the *kharja* in his own mouth, attacking the jealous guardian. The Hebrew *muwashshaḥa* by Moshe ibn Ezra speaks of his betrayal by his lover, who has let loose the secret of their love; his lover's eyes are the cause of the poet's love, but sometimes they seem ominous (*nefastos*). He puts his *kharja* in the mouth of a gazelle, whose song reminds him of the spy's presence.

The guardian/chaperone/spy — the *raqīb* — is a stock figure in Arabic poetry, always a negative one, someone who acts to keep lovers apart from each other, who follows them and tries to catch them at love-making, and who spreads gossip and rumors about them. The guardian might also be, by an act of projection, an interior "self-guardian" of individual morals, exteriorized as a leering censor . . . .

15.

Mamma, my lover's

slave-boy

is also mine --

for better or worse!

خ

This *kharja* is used in two different *muwashshaḥat.* The first is by al-Saraqusṭī, the Butcher. The *muwashshaḥa* was discovered after Sola-Solé's *Corpus* was published and must be added to the known Romance kharjas. James Monroe, who found this *kharja* (and a few others, after Sola-Solé), says it cannot have been written after 1085. The *kharja* is mostly in colloquial Andalusian Arabic, and contains but two Romance words. In al-Saraqusṭī's *muwashshaḥa* the beloved is described as usual: a sultan, a garden, one beauteous and graceful, a gentle fawn, who so loved the poet she became possessed and called to her mother for help.

The identical *kharja* is also used by Abū ᶜĪsā Ibn Labbūn, a vizier to ᶜAbd ᶜal-Aziz of Valencia. His *muwashshaḥa* has some of the same language as that of al-Saraqusṭī: the poet has been captured by a fawn who is haughty and oppressive, who shuns him, who doesn't notice that the poet is wasting away -- that is, it is darker in tone, and clearly homoerotic. In both poems, however, the *kharja* is sung by a young woman, expressing the feelings of any lover, male or female.

16.

No, I don't want your flattery or your friendship—

I want nobody but my brown-skinned love!

خ

Written by al-Kumayt al-Gharbī, a poet at the court of king Mustaʿīn of Zaragoza, this love poem first complains of the beloved, who has left the poet, who violates promises — is it good to lie? he asks. The poet then curses Time, a tyrannous judge. The poet is between life and death, he can't decide, he is crazy with love — is the beloved's cheek pure silver, or a venomous asp? The *kharja* is spoken by the poet in the voice of a young woman: in the last strophe of the *muwashshaḥa* the poet says: "I couldn't restrain myself, I was afraid of death, so speaking as a young woman singing to her lover, I recited . . ." — this *kharja*.

17.

Come to me, my love.

For if you run off, you cheat,

no good will come of that.

So stay with me,

we should be together!

خ

Another *muwashshaḥa* by al-Kumayt al-Gharbī, a love poem; he has found consolation in wine and the kisses of his lover; the guardian's watchfulness and his humiliation of the poet are of no import; the spy's words are absurd, he proclaims. When the lover appears in the night, she is of overwhelming beauty, etc. The *kharja* is said to be sung by this young woman to her lover; the lover is the writer of, and also appears in, the *muwashshaḥa* (remember, he is the one who appropriated the *kharja*, for his own use, in "real life," as it were, from an existing traditional song). Sola-Solé points out that the young woman who sings the *kharja* "feigns" her yearning to be with her lover — "*sus palabras eran pura ficcíon*," says the *muwashshāḥa's* last strophe, according to a Spanish translation — as are, of course, the words of the poet-protagonist, who has "feigned" the young woman herself, and her speech, the speech in which she now feigns her love. If self-referentiality and gender-switching are marks of "post-modern" writing, here they appear in an early medieval lyric!

18.

As he never opens his mouth,

to talk to me or give me kisses,

this lover is not the one to save me

from my death, mamma!

———————————

19.

He doesn't stay here with me,

but he doesn't say a word, either —

I can't sleep, mamma,

with these burning breasts!

خ

Numbers 18 and 19 are similar, but not the same, *kharjas* which close an identical *muwashshaḫa* used by two different poets, number 18 by al-Kumayt al-Gharbī, while number 19 is anonymous. The readings of the *kharjas* are very problematical. The *muwashshaḫa* itself is a poem about a poet and his beloved. The poet is weary of love, his heart is as tired as the wings of a bird attacked by arrows. His lover is described in the usual manner; all in all, she is the most beautiful of all creatures; she is one of the *houris* of paradise. The poet then sings the *kharja* in his own voice, while the beloved's eyes are still filled with her dreams. In both cases, the young woman despairs at the silence and reticence and impending departure of her lover. Burning breasts/hearts are a common topos in Arabic, a sign of ardency.

20.

Come, everyone: family, friends!

I'm going to shoot him with arrows!

My man sings to other women

in the town of Valencia!

خ

The *muwashshaḥa* is by the great Jewish poet Moshe ibn 'Ezra. It is dedicated to another great Jewish poet, Yehūdā Halevī. In the *muwashshaḥa*, the poet says that in the night, while in bed, he reaches for the books written by Yehūdā Halevī. The difficult and dubious readings of this *kharja* perhaps demand some comment. García Gómez says the man ¨hawks his love¨ in Valencia and on his first try he saw "eyes" (*welyos, ojos*) in the first line; Stern only dealt with the last two words, one of which he questioned, in his usual careful and modest manner; Lévi-Provençal had even other ideas; and the word *kaned (*Latin, *cano*: to sing, to play an instrument*)* was sometime confused with *vended,* to sell -- so that in various versions, the man sings to other women, or sells his love, in Valencia. The *kharja* is sung by a "daughter of Granada," who "moved by jealousy" sings a song of love to her "little fawn," her beloved.

21.

I'm going to Seville

disguised as a merchant.

I will breach the walls

of Ibn Muhājir's villa!

خ

Another *muwashshaḥa* in Hebrew, by Moshe ibn 'Ezra, in praise of a "member of the family of Ibn Muhājir." The *muwashshaḥa* is "extremely mutilated" and "bastante defectuoso," according to Sola-Solé. The sense is that the young woman (a "gracious gazelle") is thinking about disguising herself as a merchant, following her lover to Seville, and to the house of his friend Ibn Muhājir. This last line has been differently read; García Gómez says it means something like "To make friends with Ibn Muhājir," while others think it means she should break into Ibn Muhājir's villa, to discover her lover and his friends carrying on inside. A "correct" reading of this "mutilated" *kharja* is probably unattainable; and any reading must be accepted as tentative.

22.

My lover is sick —

sick from loving me!

Will nothing make him well?

Come, let him lie close to me,

for being with me will cure him!

خ

The *muwashshaḥa* is by the famous Arab poet Abū-l-ʿAbbās al-Aʿmà al-Tuṭīlī, "el Ciego de Tudela," the blind poet of Tudela. Stern discovered and published the poem in 1949, the first in a series of *muwashshaḥāt* in Arabic containing a partially-Romance *kharja*. In the *muwashshaḥa*, the poet makes reference to the Kaʿba, and to the various rituals related to the journey to Mecca — the pilgrimage to Mecca is compared to the "journey" of lovers' hearts, which go between the calls of love and the answers of desire; this might be somewhat blasphemous? The poet puts the *kharja* in the voice of the beloved, who sings (amorously and coquettishly, according to the text of the *muwashshaḥa*), the song of a young woman in love. Again, controversy surrounds this *kharja* — the second line, for instance, might be read "How could he not be?"

23.

Tell me:

who could bear such an absence!

O, eyes of my passionate lover,

who but you?

خ

Another poem by the blind poet of Tudela, a love poem in the usual manner. He thinks about the beloved's favors, he is humiliated by her to the point of total submission, he keeps the secret of their love, she is like a white gazelle, the most beautiful of God's creatures . . . . the *kharja* is in the voice of the poet's lover, who is said, in the *muwashshaḥa,* to be "crying with pain at their parting, full of sadness . . . "; only someone so deeply in love could bear the absence of his lover.

24.

Mercy, mercy, my beautiful one!

Tell me — by God! --

why do you wish to kill me?

خ

Another *muwashshaḥa* by al-Tuṭīlī, a love poem for his friend Aḥmad. The poet was drinking wine in a Christian convent (the drinking of wine, the role of the wine-merchant, the tavern in a convent, are often carefully set in a Christian context) He was talking to the young Aḥmad about the lawfulness of drinking wine, when he confessed his love for him, as revealed by his tears. The lover is described in the usual fashion; for example, his eyes have killed fierce lions. The *kharja* is put in the voice of a girl also in love with the same Aḥmad, but hurt by his pride and disdain.

25.

It is dawn. And, yes,

it is the feast of al-Anṣarā!

I will put on my brocade robe,

I will break a lance!

خ

Another poem by al-Tuṭīlī, a panegyric to one Abū Hafṣ al-Hawzanī, perhaps from a family of lawyers and men of science in Seville. The festival of al-'Anṣarā was celebrated in al-Andalus at the summer solstice, and involved games with lances and shields; in a word, jousting. The sexual implications of the sport are clear. The *kharja* is in the voice of a woman, singing of the love between herself and the poet, who has made her an unexpected visit. But it might also be interpreted as wholly a man's *kharja*, with the woman's voice singing of love between the poet and his friend al-Hawzanī (in the fourth strophe of the *muwashshaḥa*, García Gómez´s translation puns on Hawzanī and the Spanish word *hazañas,* feats or deeds, often referring to hunting exploits).

26.

As for me (since the one I love

stirs my heart with glances

from her arrow-feathered eyes),

as for me,

I cry, O, do not aim to kill me!

خ

Another *kharja* in a *muwashshaḥa* by al-Tutili -- the *muwashshaḥa* speaks of the poet's beloved as having striking eyebrows, with a freshness to his mouth, with a cheek "adorned" by "embroideries", and a mole that "proudly" struts like a "negro" in "flowerbeds of jasmine"! His loved one, however, refuses a kiss, which the poet interprets as modesty, and then introduces as his *kharja*, "what Qays said to ᶜAbla." But two earlier poets had the name Qays, one of whom loved Layla and the other who loved Lubna -- Layla would fit the rhyme scheme in Arabic, but poems to Lubna make heavy use of the arrow-metaphor also used in this *kharja*. The *kharja*, also discovered by Monroe later than Sola-Sole's construction of the *Corpus*, may not be a quotation of a traditional song, but a "learned pastiche," influenced by earlier ᶜUdri literary themes, and therefore somewhat anomalous.

27.

Mamma, I know that boy loves me,

but I don't know why.

Yet I can't tell him "No!"

خ

This *kharja* is also from a *muwashshaha* by Abū-l-'Abbās al-Aʿmà al-Tuṭīlī, the author of *kharja*s 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28a.. In the poem he describes his love as like a sultan, a garden, beauteous and graceful, a gentle fawn, who became "possessed" by love for the poet, turning to her mother for advice and comfort. Her mother listens to her song, which is the *kharja*. Again, this kharja, found by Monroe, has as its only Romance word the ubiquitous "mamma." Some have contended that a single Romance word does not a Romance *kharja* make. There are no set rules, however, on the number or percentage of Romance words needed -- the *kharjas* range over a continuum from just one to a majority of Romance words -- to decide admission to the corpus. As to "mámma," its double letter and its stress on the penultimate syllable, puts it firmly in place as a Romance usage. Not until sometime in the 18th century, under influence from the French "mamán," was the "mamá" adopted into Spanish.

28a/28b.

O my gentle mother!

In the morning I will see

the good Abū-l-Ḥajjāj,

his face like the dawn!

———————————

I can't sleep, mamma!

In the morning I will see

the good Abū-l-Qāsim,

his face like the dawn!

خ

These *kharjas*, almost identical, belong to different *muwashshaḥāt*, the first by al-Tuṭīlī, and the other by a lawyer or judge, Abū Muḥammad al-Aṣbāḥī al-Lāridī (of Lérida). The first is a panegyric addressed to a vizier named Abū-l-Ḥajjāj; its *kharja* is in the voice of a young woman, confiding in her mother. The second *muwashshaḥa* is a love poem written for the poet's friend Abū-l-Qāsim; the *kharja* is also put into the voice of a woman, speaking to her mother. As we have seen, In many *kharja*s the sexual registers are blurred, with male poets eulogizing or addressing male subjects, shifting in the *kharja*s to the voice of a woman, often borrowing a traditional woman's song. The intent is not to disguise homosexual relationships, but to exploit given materials to make *poetry*, without attention to gender.

29.

My love has gone away;

mamma, I am filled with grief!

But how is it that I've sinned?

And he hasn't?

After all, he left me!

خ

Ibn Yinniq (1152-1186) was famous in Cordoba as a writer; his name is an Arabized form of the Romance name Íñigo. Yinniq's *muwashshaha* is a panegyric to a sovereign who has gone off to war, comparing the poet's longing to that of a woman for her absent beloved. The lord is one who "kindles" passion and wastes the poet with "disease" -- a common description of the pangs of love. The sovereign/beloved is like the sun, and like "perfumed writing," however that is to be taken. The *kharja* sums up the poet's sorrow, in the voice of a young woman, who asks her mother to help her understand just who is the "sinner" in this situation -- the one who has left, or the one who may or may not be the cause of the other's having left? She is baffled, since she is sure she committed no sin. Another *kharja*, not in Sola-Solé's *Corpus*, discovered later by Monroe.

30.

Tell me honestly, mamma:

won't that glad day ever come,

in which my melancholy

will be eased?

خ

This *kharja* is part of a *muwashshaḥa* by a poet named Abū-l-Qāsim al-Manīšī (from Manises), or ʻAsā al-Aʻmà, "the Staff of The Blind," because he was the guide of the celebrated blind poet al-Tuṭīlī. The *muwashshaḥa* is a panegryric to a vizier named ʿAbd Allāh, filled with protestations of love and many tears and much sadness, for this man is "paradise on earth." The *kharja* is in the voice of a woman, who is said also to be in love with ʿAbd Allāh, lamenting his absence, but alluding to his promised return.

31.

Oh, lover!

Are you trying to kill me?

I know very well why you ran off —

but, O God, now what can I do?

خ

The *muwashshaḥa* is by the Arab poet Abū Bakr Yaḥyà ibn Baqī. It is a love poem, to a "gazelle of the Banū Ṯābit," who is cruel to him. The Banū Ṯābit were originally Berbers from North Africa. The poet asks the beloved: Will she come to see him? -- he is turning into a shadow, and soon will be nothing at all. The girl answers: I will see you before that happens. But he will go crazy at nights, before she comes, he says; he then puts the *kharja* in the voice of a young woman, whom he asks to sing for him, while he drowns his sadness in wine.

32.

The holidays are coming,

but I am still alone.

My heart burns for him!

خ

This *kharja* is used in two different *muwashshaḥāt*; one by Ibn Baqī, in Arabic; the other by the great Hebrew poet Yehūdā Halevī, a contemporary of Ibn Baqī. The first *muwashshaḥa* is a love poem: the East wind brings memories of the beloved to the poet; he suffers more than he can stand, compares the Arab letter *'dāl* to curls that are like roses around his face, and the Arab *nūn* to the roundness of his cheeks — and references to the lover are mostly in the masculine: *él, amigo*, etc. Ibn Baqī's *kharja* is put into the voice of a young woman who thinks about leaving her lover. Halevī's *muwashshaḥa* is directed to his friend the poet Moshe ben Ezra, consoling him on the death of his brother, Yehūdā ben Ezra, and the absence of Yōsef, another brother. The *kharja* is in the voice of Moshe ben Ezra, who sings the song of a young girl, who has waited for the day of her lover's arrival — but he did not come. Some Spanish translators have chosen the word "Pascua" for the Romance *pškh* or *(b)šqh— pas(c)ua* or *basqua.* Jews and Christians celebrated Muslim holidays in al-Andalus, and Muslims did the same in return. A "burning heart," as we have noted before, is a commonplace in Arabic poetry.

33.

Don't bite, my love;

I mean it — you're much too rough!

You've torn my sheer blouse . . . .

Enough! Stop! No more!

ڂ

Three poets have used this *kharja* for their *muwashshaḥāt* — Ibn Baqī, Ibn Ruḥaym, and Yehūdā Halevī. The three, two Arabs and one Jew, are nearly contemporaries, and each has written an amorous *muwashshaḥa* with this somewhat racy *kharja*. In all three *kharjas* the young woman lover complains about the erotic excesses of her lover and wishes him to stop his roughness with her — in Ibn Baqī's poem she is described as being between "doubt and disdain" (while nude "between cushions and curtains"). In Ibn Raḥaym's *muwashshaḥa* he has tasted the honey of her mouth while lying on her breast, when suddenly she cries out "I beg you in the name of love . . ." and recites the *kharja*. In the Hebrew of Halevī, the man is caressing the hair of his beloved in a garden, when she tells him "hands off!", says that his love-talk is just blarney, intended only to "disarm" her heart, and then she sings the *kharja*.

34.

Come, my lord, come!

Love is so good,

and time goes by much better,

when I'm with the son of al-Daiyān.

ڃ

Yehūdā Halevī's *muwashshaḥa*, containing this *kharja*, extols the many virtues of a man named al-Ḥassān ben al-Daiyān, also known simply as David, about whom nothing else is known. Halevī recites David's many virtues and mourns his absence — the Red Sea itself, the poet says, is a desert, compared to the sea of tears he has shed for his friend. Above the poet, from its nest in a myrtle tree, a dove is watching, and she sings the words of a young woman in love: the *kharja* itself. The figure of "time" or Time, in this *muwashshaḥa* and *kharja* is strongly contended among scholars; Sola-Solé capitalizes the word in his literal translation of the *muwashshaḥa*, and speaks of the "goodness of Time's healing protection." Stern has the singer complain that the beloved has been gone much too long a time. Others see the reference to time as "dangerous times," from which the lover needs the protection of the son of al-Daiyān (*daiyān* is a judge). Time as an abstract, capitalized concept does not seem right, especially if one remembers that most of the *kharjas* are best regarded as traditional lyrics. As always, *kharja* intepretations and translations are tentative, speculative and bound to be controversial.

35.

So, you know divination?

And you can truly see the future?

Then tell me when he will come back to me,

my beloved Isḥāq!

خ

Another Hebrew *muwashshaḥ* by Yehūdā Halevī, in honor of Abū Ibrāhīm Isḥāq ibn al-Muhājir (the same mentioned by Moshe ben Ezra in *kharja* 20). The *maṭla*^{c}, or opening lines of the *muwashshaḥa,* speaks of red wine poured into a white cup, making comparison to the sun's rays shining through a hailstorm. The *kharja* is put into the mouth of "the people," who are anxious for the return of their lord.

36.

When my lord Cidello comes

—what good news! —

he appears like a ray of sun,

shining on Guadalajara!

خ

Again, a poem by Yehūdā Halevī, another panegryic — this one for Yōsef ibn Ferrusiel, a Jew with much influence at the court of Alfonso VI and a leader in the Jewish community. He was a contemporary of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, the famous El Cid; the Jews chose to call their champion Cidello, or Little Cid. (Ar. *sīd* = lord.) The *kharja* is a traditional song of welcome, and no other *kharja* is like it — instead, we have had anxiousness, despair, jealousy, complaint, longing: here we have a cry of gladness. It is in the voice of the Jewish people, who are celebrating Yōsef's return from Guadalajara. This *muwashshaḥa*, as is true of many Hebrew *muwashshaḥāt*, is loaded with Biblical references: from Genesis, Deuteronomy, Samuel, Job, Zechariah, Micah and others.

37.

Tell me, sisters,

how to keep my sadness at bay.

Without my love I cannot live —

I will fly off to look for him!

خ

Another panegryic by Halevī, this one for Rabbi Ishāq ibn Qrispín, the poet's good friend— he is called *mi cervatillo*, my fawn, often a metaphor for a lover. The usual descriptions of the beloved are offered: cheeks like a garden, teeth like pearls, with a few new ones: your neck is high as a cedar, the venom of your snakes is like honey, I will be like a slave who doesn't wish to be free . . . . The *kharja*'s reference to sisters/*compañeras* is very much like the references to "mamma" or mothers, as confidantes and comforters; this *kharja* is in the voice of a young woman telling her companions, in a voice filled with bitterness, of the pain of love.

38.

O God! How can I live

with this hasty lover!

Almost before I greet him

he's threatening to leave!

خ

Another by Halevī, in honor of Abū Isḥāq Nahmān ibn Azhār, whom he calls a "sure shepherd" to his people; even if ten thousand nations rose up against him, he and his horses would grind them all to dust. The *kharja* is in the voice of the poet himself, who sings the song of a young woman, *una gacela bella*, who matches the poet's feelings of anxious loss, as her lover is at the point of leaving again.

39.

I wish, if he leaves me, he would go

without that violence

that breaks my heart

and makes me more depressed!

خ

Halevī's *muwashshaḥ* is a love poem: his lover is equal to the sun, she destroys even the hearts of lions, all in all, she is like the best of all the stars. In this case, the poet says (in translation) that the lover/*gacela* who sings the *kharja* does so "*en ladino*," or Ibero-Romance — the Hebrew original might say *aramit*, Aramaic, or could be read as *arumit*, Romance or Latin. Halevī wishes only to say the girl is a Christian. In any case, one day he is alive, the next day he is dead; finally, her song "annihilates" him, as she sings of a situation that is like his own. Since the transcription and translation of this *kharja* vary widely between Stern, Cantera, García Gómez and Sola-Solé, especially in terms of the first line, I have made some guesses that satisfy my sense of the intent of the *kharja*.

40.

I don’t want a necklace of pearls, mamma.

I am already very well-dressed;

my lover wants to see my snow-white neck,

bare of any bangles!

خ

Yahūdā Halevī again, another love poem in Hebrew. He recounts his lover’s beauties -- her mouth is like fruit syrup and balsam — and she has no need for beautiful brocaded clothes or more jewelry, linking to the theme of the *kharja*. A young woman’s unadorned beauty is a *topos* of classical Arabic poetry. The *kharja* is put into the mouth of a tree, a myrtle of Saron (Sharon), on the coast of Israel, singing the words of a young woman to her mother. This *kharja* seems to most powerfully echo the voice of a real woman, a thousand years ago.

41a

Little boy, like another's love,

you no longer sleep on my breast.

———————————

41b.

Little boy, like another's love,

you will always sleep on my breast!

خ

A *kharja* of homosexual love, used with two different *muwashshaḥat*; the first is an anonymous love poem in Arabic with the typical praises, the second is by Yeḥūdā Halevī, a panegyric in Hebrew to honor Abū-l-Ḥasan Meir ibn Qamniel, who served the courts of three Almoravid kings as a doctor and courtier. Meir is a name that means "one who is enlightened," one who illumines the path to the land of Israel. The *kharjas* have, obviously, opposite meanings — one of the boys is lost forever, the other lives forever in the poet's memory. The first *kharja* is in the mouth of a young woman, who sings of the absence of her lover; the poet makes uses of this feminine voice in a traditional oral song to express his love for a boy; the second is put in the voice of Ibn Qamniel, *el mando*, the Commander, who likes to sing this *kharja* to his close friends . . . .

42a/42b.

My heart is torn from me.

O God! Will it return?

My heart is in great pain

because of the one I love.

My heart is sick — when will it be cured?

My heart has gone out of me.

O God! will it come back?

This strange pain is so fierce —

when will it be healed?

خ

Essentially the same *kharja*, used with two different *muwashshaḥāt* in Hebrew. The first is by Yeḥūdā Halevī, and is much older than the second, by Todrōs ben Yehūdā Abū-l-ʿAfia, written almost two centuries later, and clearly inspired by Halevī's version. Halevī's *muwashshaḥa* is a panegyric for a friend named Abraham, his "cervatillo" or fawn, also his gazelle. Halevī's *kharja* is put in the voice of a young woman who sings bitterly, as her lover is not only absent, but sick (of love). Abū-l-ʿAfia's poem is also a panegryic, to his namesake, Don Todrōs ben Yehūdā Abū-l-ʿAfia, a great scholar and a courtier to king Alfonso X, the Learned. Again, the poet uses the fawn/gazelle images to denote his love for his lord, whom he has put on the pedestal of his heart. The *kharja*, reflecting the poet's feelings, is in the voice of a swallow, who cries out in la lengua de Edom," that is, of Christendom, sometimes used to particularly designate the Crusader Kingdom in control of Jerusalem.

43.

What shall I do, mamma?

My lover is pounding at the door!

خ

The *muwashshaḥa* is by the Jewish poet Yōsef ibn Ṣaddiq; it is a love song to his *amigo*, his *cervatillo* (fawn), his only sun, as well as many other high-flown compliments. The *kharja* is voiced by a "timorous" young woman, who cries out loudly, "I can't contain myself," calling to her mother for help. The lover is described, in Spanish, as knocking at the door with a certain "*violencia*." The simplicity of the *kharja*, in the words of one scholar (Armistead), "invites us to inquire into what is going on, to participate in the poetic process." One might think of the door not literally, perhaps, but as a metaphor for her chastity?

44.

What will I do?

What will become of me?

My love,

don't leave me!

خ

This *kharja* is used in two different *muwashshaḥāt*, the older one by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ruḥaym, a vizier and tax official in Seville in the first half of the twelfth century. The second use of the kharja is in a *muwashshaḥa* by Abū-l-ʿAfia. Ibn Ruḥaym's *muwashshaḥa* is in praise of a certain Abū-l-Aṣbaġ ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, with the *kharja* voiced by a young woman who praises ʻAbd al-ʿAzīz's beauty, but in a "strange language," that is, the language of Christians, or Ibero-Romance. Abū-l-ʿAfia's *muwashshaḥa* praises Don Iṣḥāq ibn Ṣadōq, a councilor to king Alfonso the Learned. In a rare move, the *kharja* is sung as if by the city of Seville itself, mourning Don Iṣḥāq's absence.

45.

Come, my love, with something more to my taste;

I don't like all your new ideas!

Go slowly, that's how it should be.

Be satisfied with that and so will I.

خ

A *muwashshaḥa* by ʿAbd al-Mālik Ibn Quzmān (see also *kharja* 64), a celebrated Cordoban poet, known more for his *zajals*. This *muwashshaḥa* opens with a traditional topic: a plea to "censors" not to judge the poet's behavior while in love; he adds that the glances of his lover almost kill him, he can't get her image out of his mind, she has teeth like pearls and red painted lips . . . . the *kharja* is in the voice of the woman the poet loves, complaining about the innovations he wants to introduce into their love-making. Innovation, newness, might not be especially admired in the society of al-Andalus, among worshipful Arabs, Jews and Christians. Sola-Solé points out that the rhyme of the *qufls*, in *-ali, ari-, ali-*, clearly indicates that the *kharja* was derived from a popular song — as is posited of all *kharjas*, while the *muwashshaḥat* are loaded with stock phrases and images. At times, literary innovation is little respected, nor is innovation in social or religious norms, in Arabic life, nor does this woman appreciate innovations in love-making.

46.

Tell me: what shall I do?

How will I live?

I wait and wait for my dear love.

I will die waiting for him.

خ

A *muwashshaḥa* by Abraham ibn ʿEzra (1092-1164), celebrating a lover whose beauty can raise the dead, even those in Hell (Sheol). The lover is again a fawn, the best of fawns, in fact. The nouns, pronouns and adjectives referring to the lover are masculine — *amado, cervatillo, él*, etc. But the *kharja* is, as usual, in the voice of a young woman, bitter about her lover's absence — with whom the poet says he commiserates in his soul.

47.

Teeth like a string of pearls,

mouth sweet as honey —

come, kiss me, my love;

come, be by my side again,

loving me as you did yesterday.

خ

A *muwashshaḥa* by Abū Bakr Yaḥyà ibn al-Ṣayrafī, an Arab vizier and poet, and a well-known panegyrist. This *muwashshaḥa* is for a certain ʿAbd al-Munʿim, and runs through the usual *topoi* of Arabic poetry: the lover is like a branch of laurel, a "savage" steer, the edge of a sword; his clothes are rays of the sun, his breast like two apples, with the scent of camphor and cast in amber and garnet (later, like marble); these attributes continue in the *kharja* with its string of pearls, its mouth sweet as honey — pop song cliches even today. How many women sing in lament? the poet asks, how many feel the pain of absence? how many are half mad until their lover appears? — and then the *kharja* itself is sung by them.

48.

You know, my love,

death now is capturing me.

Come, come, my love,

I can't sleep without seeing you.

خ

By an Arab poet named Abū-l-Walīd Yūnus ibn ʿIsā al-Habbāz al-Mursī, as is *kharja* 7. This *muwashshaḥa* is dedicated to a "bachelor" named ʿĪsā, without whom the poet cannot live, a man who has sold himself, a precious jewel, for a low price. The *kharja* is sung by a young woman "who suffers the same ill as does the poet," that is, they cannot sleep: insomnia is another commonplace of classical Arabic poetry. In an interesting passage in the *muwashshaḥa* the poet speaks openly of himself: "I said to myself: 'Persevere!' I said to my lover: 'Don't be so unjust!' I said to my body: 'Don't melt away'! I said to my limbs: 'Fly!' " And he says of the singer of the *kharja*: She sings with passion, as if she were me . . . .

49.

Well, good morning! And tell me,

where have you been?

I will let you love another,

if you also love me.

ڃ

The *muwashshaḥa* is by Abū-l-ᶜĀfia (Todrōs ben Yehūdā Abū-l ᶜĀfia), and is again a panegyric to the rabbi Don Todros Abū-l-ᶜĀfia. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* and other sources say of the poet, ben Judah, that he was a libertine and tax collector; his cousin ben Joseph on the other hand was a rabbi, kabbalist, and community leader (and neither should be confused with Abraham Abulafia, also a kabbalist, who wrote a treatise on the Golem). All three were contemporaries. Umberto Eco named a protagonist's home computer "Abulafia" in *Foucault's Pendulum*, not for our poet, but for Abraham Abulafia. The *muwashshaḥa* is unusually full of animals: a doe, the Great Bear or Osa Mayor, a lion, a gazelle, even a worm. The *kharja* is in the voice of a woman speaking to her lover just returning at dawn ("Aube belle, dis-moi, d'où viens tu?" in Stern's translation; "Aurora buena," says Cantera; "Aurora bella," says García Gómez) from an all-night dalliance with another girl.

50.

Seducer! Shameless seducer!

O, come back here again —

and rest with me, take your ease,

after your hard soldiering.

خ

The *muwashshaḥa* is by an anonymous Arab poet, a love poem of the usual sort: its standard themes include the impossibility of hiding one's love from others, the comparison of the lover to a gazelle (albeit a traitorous one), the plucking of flowers from the cheeks of the lover, the glance of an eye that can kill. The *kharja* is a difficult one, and has been a source of much contention; my interpretation is one among many, some seeing an illicit lover, a wife eager for love, and a jealous husband, others the tale of a warrior whom she wishes home from battle, where he can rest in her arms. The jealous husband, or *gilos*, is difficult to defend, as *gilos* is a borrowing from later Provençal, a term known to García Gómez, but not to the poet; that is, it is anachronistic. One should never forget that the interpretation of the *kharjas* is replete with this kind of example; a few scholars, for instance, claim that *none* of the *kharjas* have been properly translated, or even transcribed (though not particularly helpful in supplying better interpretations). The manuscripts are patchy, the orthography not always clear, transcribers and copiers made errors, the meanings of Arabic, Hebrew and Romance words are not always well-fixed, and personal idiosyncrasies creep into the poems.

51.

Daybreak — it makes me amorous,

but it also pains my soul.

Tonight the guardian is watching my love.

خ

Another anonymous Arabic *muwashshaḥa*, a panegyric to a vizier named Muḥammad, with introductory verses on the theme of wine and love-loss. This Muḥammad is also referred to in Spanish translations, twice, as a *cervatillo* or fawn — yet the Arabic in one place uses a word for "gazelle" that is either masculine or feminine; in the other place, the Arabic for gazelle is masculine. These shifting gender references are fairly typical in Arabic poetry, and in our day provide room for assertions not always accurate. The shifting references do, however, bring a certain positive mystery or uncertainty to the poetry itself, a *frisson* that the best poetry requires. In this poem we again see the guardian or spy, lurking in the shadows; the other *topoi* is that of the dawn, often seen as the time of departing, as well as the time for one more bout of love — we might see a pun too on *alma* and *alba,* but only in modern Spanish translation.

52.

I won't make love to you

except on one condition:

that you lift my ankle-bracelets

to my earrings!

خ

Another anonymous Arabic *muwashshaḥa*, with an erotic *kharja* describing a sexual position as might be found in an Arabic *Kama Sutra*. The *muwashshaḥa* is filled with images of the poet's "love" — perhaps a girl in a tavern, for she is asked to serve the poet wine, as yellow as gold, the color of amber, wine that laughs in the cup like the teeth that shine in her mouth — he calls her ¨*la señora de los pendientes*,¨ the lady of the earrings. She answers in the *kharja*, boldly, laughingly, seductively, humorously; this is a girl experienced and happy, a girl that knows what she wants and needs to look out for herself, as no one else is likely to do so. There is a hint that the song might have been one sung originally at a wedding-party.

53.

This insolent, reckless

brawler, mamma,

took me by force;

we might have perished together,

for he is strong as the sea-surge!

خ

An anonymous Arab *muwashshaḥa* with the standard catch-phrases, but with a religious allusion that is a bit daring and slightly sacriligeous, as we saw in *kharja* 22. The poet cries, "Oh, beautiful Kaᶜba," referring to the cubic stone building at Mecca, built, according to Islam, by Adam, then rebuilt by Abraham and the sons of Noah. The poet asks that we drink to "the purity of life and the purity of death." He then says his lover has passed all limits in her beauty. And admits that he has ripped her clothes . . . . The young woman singing the *kharja* confides to her mother "with disdain" as to how her lover has treated her.

54.

If you want me

as your dear love,

then kiss this string of pearls,

O little mouth of cherries!

خ

Arabic, anonymous, this *muwashshaḥa* is again about love and the agony of absence. The poet cannot sleep, his pain and suffering bring to mind the beloved, his eyes are "destroyed" with the pain of love — but all this suffering and pain are a help to his imagination, his vision of her when she is apart from him. The singer of the *kharja* voices the words of a young woman who, despite the watchfulness of her guardian, has found a way to be with her lover — the *kharja* emphasizes her role as the primary actor in this scene; she takes charge of the situation, she instructs him.

55.

Mamma, my love

has blond hair,

a white neck,

and a little rosy mouth!

خ

An anonymous Arabic *muwashshaḥa*, a love poem dedicated to another "bachelor" named Aḥmad, who is the poet's "*amigo*." The poet confesses that no one pleases him, except blondes, like Aḥmad. This *amigo's* glances have pierced many a heart, they are like arrows, fletched with his eyelashes! Once, when the poet was sitting next to Aḥmad, telling him about his pangs of love (for which the poet had to see a doctor), Aḥmad's guardian crept up and spied on them . . . just so, in the *kharja*, a young woman sings of her love and her aching heart; she has "spied" her lover's charms, and praises them to her mother.

56.

The one who robs me of my soul,

is the one who enraptures my soul.

خ

Another *muwashshaḥa* by an anonymous Arab poet, in five very short strophes. Sola-Solé characterizes it as "developing the themes of submission and of responsibility in love." The poet speaks of his faithfulness to the rules of love — indeed, he believes in "la religión de amor." He has accepted unprotestingly his humiliation and pain at the hands of his lover; he is among those who consider their sorrows as favors. As to the *kharja*, although written in Arabic letters, all the words themselves are Romance terms — which, together with its simplicity, argues for a traditional or popular origin. The *kharja* is said to be sung by the young woman who is herself the poet's lover (the one who has made him sick with love, but whose voice heals him); she tells her mother the dilemma of her feelings . . .

57.

Show me mercy, my love!

Don't leave me alone!

Kiss me hard on my sweet mouth.

Then you won't leave so soon!

خ

The anonymous Arab poet of this *muwashshaḥa* remembers seeing his lover in the street, where he spoke to her "enigmatically," since he was close to dying at the encounter! He runs through all the commonplaces: she is a human gazelle, born in spring; she is a branch of emeralds, a new moon, a light in the shadows, her mouth and lips are like pearls in a wineglass, her glances like arrows . . . the beloved is then said to declare her willingness to be together with the poet, melting away his tears and humiliation, and entreating him with the words of the *kharja*.

58.

See the scratches on my breasts!

I am dying, from bites sharp as spears,

sharp as burning diamond points!

خ

An anonymous Arab *muwashshaḥa* — again, a little gazelle has mortified the poet with her large and seductive black eyes; he is mad with love, afflicted, nervous, emaciated. Her locks of hair are like serpents about to strike. There is hardly a way in which she is good for him, despite her beauty. She displays her breasts "defiantly," with their bites. The poet himself uses the song of a young woman who has had experience with scratches and bites from a lover -- a different woman than the one the poet is talking about in the *muwashshaḥa*'s strophes, another of those dizzying register shifts. Sola-Solé says, in the last line of the *kharja*, that the bites are sharp as lances, with points like diamonds; no one else seems to agree — García Gómez changes his mind completely between his first and second attempts at translation and says the breasts/ lances are burning with *llamas* (flames) instead of being sharp as the points of *diamantes*. He also comments, wisely, that there are "many doubts" in trying to present the right reading of this *kharja*; this could be said of many (most?) of them.

59.

Go away, you miserable bastard,

get on your way —

you don't keep your promises!

خ

Only two strophes remain from this anonymous Hebrew *muwashshaḥa* (the fourth and fifth), in which the poet seems to speak of his lover as having rescued him from his enemies, and from the tomb; for this gazelle he would give his life. The Spanish translators have used the word "*desvergonzado"* in the first line of the kharja, meaning a shameless person, an impudent one, immodest, etc. (from the Latin, *inverecundus).* I felt it needed something stronger — maybe even "son of a bitch" would work? In the *kharja*, the young woman angrily challenges her lover's alibis and excuses. The second line --"ve tu camino" -- is precisely Ray Charles's "Hit the road, Jack."

60.

O, my dark beloved,

the apple of my eye;

O my love,

who can endure your absence?

خ

A Hebrew *muwashshaḥa*, also anonymous, with all the traditional themes: love, absence, lamentations; it seems clearly homosexual in its tone and references (the lover is an *asesino* like Cain, for instance). There is also a dialogue in this *muwashshaḥa*; the poet says to his lover, "Don't be so rebellious!," and the lover answers with a sneer:

"You old drunks, you get tipsy on water instead of wine
— can't you see that the feelings that devour young men
come from the wild mountains and the cold springs;
that they claw us like lions!"

The first two strophes are in Hebrew, and the remaining are in Aramaic, switching at the point at which the poet loses power over his own tongue. The quick shifts in logic and language, the switch in registers, all belie a man beside himself with grief, anger and longing. The pressure of his distress makes him cry out as himself in the *kharja*, not in the voice of a young singing girl.

61.

So, you'll see what I will do!

I will fly to you.

Then my heart will know less pain,

for it will no longer mourn.

خ

Only the fifth strophe has survived of this *muwashshaḥa* by an anonymous Hebrew poet, who wishes his heart were a turtledove flying above a palace, so he could call down to his lover, who has left him. The *kharja* is totally in Romance, and once again is in the voice of the poet himself. The last line is open to various interpretations . . . .

62.

What shall I do, mamma?

My lover is leaving me!

My heart wishes to go with him —

if only I didn't love him so!

خ

This anonymous Hebrew *muwashshaḥa* tells of the tribulations of loving "a red fawn" from the tribe of Levi. The lover has brought the poet sickness and loneliness, and "ruined his heart." In searching for him the poet has thrown himself into fire and water, and has sinned against the Lord. Only his young prince can save him from hell itself — but in the end, this capricious lover will learn what it is like to be abandoned. The poet then uses the song of a young woman for his *kharja*, a woman terrified of being left alone; she, when getting out of bed in the morning, asks her mother for help in her distress. The *kharja* is almost entirely in Romance, with the obvious exception of the Arabic for the "loved one," *al-ḥabīb*.

63.

If you loved me, good man,

if you truly loved me:

you would send me

a kiss like an arrow!

خ

The anonymous Hebrew *muwashshaḥa* speaks of the poet as being one of those men who are "locked in the prison of love" by young lovers who bully and punish them, usually only because such men are older. The poet begs forgiveness, and says that if the young man changes his ways, he too will be forgiven — now, however, the lover's eyes are like a spear and his words are like fire; he keeps his arrows ready and aimed at the poet. The poet himself sings the *kharja* — some say he tries to "frighten" the young lover with the *kharja,* but that hardly seems the case; more certainly, he is begging him. The kiss like an "arrow" is my choice: the arrow is mentioned in the *muwashshaḥa*, but not in the *kharja*, which only says "give me one," taken to mean a kiss, but not otherwise specified.

64.

I’m completely insane, mamma,

with love for this neighbor of ours:

Ali, the dark-skinned,

dark-haired, dark-eyed boy!

خ

This *kharja* ends a poem by the Arab poet Ibn Quzmān, who uses the *kharja* with a poem called a *zajal* (or *zejel)*, an Arabic form related to the *muwashshaḥā*. Only a few *zajals* contain *kharjas*. The *zajal* of Ibn Quzmān is dedicated to one of his benefactors, Abū-l-Ḥasan ʿAli al-Baiyānī (from Baena), and, after praising him in the traditional manner, bluntly asks him for money, as the season of fiestas is near — O,he says, it’s not a question of buying little baubles, for that wouldn’t be right; I need valuable things for my house! The poet’s *kharja* is in the voice of a young woman, who is said to sing a beautiful song — none of this makes much sense; yet the *kharja* is charming.

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